



Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation (CFRF)

Lobster Research Fleet Pilot Project

General Description:

- The CFRF is organizing 12 lobster fishing vessels to participate in a pilot data collection project.
- The purpose is to explore and test new technologies that will enable lobstermen fishing in LCMA 2 and 3 to collect and relay biological data to managers and scientists monitoring the lobster stock in these areas.
- The Lobster Research Fleet will consist of 6 inshore vessels, fishing primarily in LCMA 2, and 6 offshore vessels fishing primarily in LCMA 3.
- The major themes of the Lobster Research Fleet Pilot Project are:
 - Electronic recording and transmission of data
 - Retained catch and discard characterization
 - Ventless trap data collection
 - Data management
- Technologies being piloted in the project include:
 - Onboard waterproof tablets
 - Electronic calipers (Bluetooth enabled)
 - Internet data transfer

Vessel Responsibilities:

Training:

- All vessel captains and designated crew members will be required to participate in an early evening technology and data collection training session to be scheduled in May/June 2013 at the Commercial Fisheries Center Building on East Farm Campus, URI. [The CFRF support staff will try and provide some flexibility in this for offshore vessel captains and crew by providing additional training opportunities, if needed.]
- Additional support from technical staff will be provided throughout the pilot project as needed.

Sampling Frequency:

- The goal for each vessel is to conduct at-sea sampling during three trips per month
- Each vessel will sample a minimum of 300 lobsters or 60 traps per month

Data Collection:

- Data collection will be done using pre-programmed, easy to use, touch screen tablets and electronic calipers, with data automatically relayed to a central database (at CFRF) via wireless internet once a fishing vessel returns to shore.
- Data collection will be focused on biological characterization of landed and discarded lobsters, and lobsters from 3 ventless traps.
- Data recorded for individual lobsters includes:
 - Carapace length
 - Sex
 - Females - Egg bearing & V-notch
 - Presence of shell disease
- Information about each trip, trawl, and trap will also be recorded, including:
 - Date of sampling
 - Depth of trawl
 - Location of samples (longitude/latitude) **confidential**
 - Soak time of traps
 - Number of traps sampled
- Lobstermen will have the option of entering notes regarding general observations, such as: tides, weather conditions, bottom type, and other species in traps.

Feedback:

- Vessel captains and designated crew members will be required to participate in a meeting with the Project Steering Committee members near the end of the pilot study to convey their observations and recommendations.

Compensation:

- A stipend of \$600/month will be granted to each participating fishing vessel in the fleet for up to a total of 12 months.
- All equipment, training, and technical support will be provided to each participating vessel without cost.

Planned Timeline:

- March 31, 2013: **Application deadline**
- April 2013: Selection and establishment of work agreements with research fleet vessels
- May – June 2013: Training sessions for captains and designated crew
- June 2013-June 2014: At-sea data collection; Ongoing data compilation/synthesis

Collaborative Approach:

- The project will be approached as a collaborative endeavor among lobstermen, and state/regional/federal scientists with a Project Steering Committee comprised of representatives from the lobstermen who fish in Lobster Management Areas 2 and 3, state managers from the RI Department of Environmental Management and the MA Division of Marine Fisheries, and staff from the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) and NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center

For more information contact:

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Applications can be found at

www.cfrfoundation.org/lobster-research-fleet